

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT, UK
SUBJECT: ASSERTIVE CONSTITUENCY ORGANIZATIONS.A SWORD
THAT CUTS TWO WAYS

REF: LONDON 11452

1. THE REG PRENTICE CASE, WHEREIN THE SECRETARY OF OVER-
SEAS DEVELOPMENT'S CONSTITUENCY LABOR OARTY (CLP) ORGANI-
ZATION VOTED TO OUST HIM AS ITS CANDIDATE IN THE NEXT
ELECTION (REFTEL), HAS ATTRACTED INTENSE PUBLIC AND MEDIA
ATTENTION, ESPECIALLY FROM RIGHT-WING SOURCES INSIDE AND
OUTSIDE LABOR PARTY. CONTROL OF PRENTICE'S CLP BY SMALL
GROUP OF LEFTIST MILITANTS HAS BEEN STRESSED, WITH LITTLE
MENTION BEING MADE OF PRENTICE'S VULNERABILITY RESULTING
FROM HIS FAILURE TO KEEP IN CLOSE CONTACT WITH HIS CLP.
HIS GOVERNMENTAL POSITION, OF COURSE, MAKES HIS PLIGHT
PARTICULARLY LEWSWORTHY, AND HIS CONTINUING EFFORTS TO
HAVE THE CLP DECISION REVERSED KEEP HIM IN THE NEWS.
FACT IS, HOWEVER, THAT CLP DISSATISFACTION WITH SERVING
MPS IS NOT PROBLEM UNIQUE TO RIGHT-WINGERS AND MODERATES,
THOUGH SOME OF LABOR'S OPPONENTS WOULD LIKE PUBLIC TO BE-
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LIEVE THAT IS CASE.

2. SIMILAR SITUATION INVOLVING LEFT-WING BACKBENCH MP HAS GONE VIRTUALLY UNREPORTED BY MEDIA. JOHN LEE, MP FROM BIRMINGHAM, BARRISTER AND MEMBER OF TRIBUNE GROUP, WAS TOLD IN SEPTEMBER THAT HE WOULD NOT BE RENOMINATED BY CLP. THE REASON: POOR RELATIONS WITH CLP AND POOR SERVICE TO HIS CONSTITUENTS, NOT UNLIKE ROOT CAUSE OF PRENTICE'S DIFFICULTIES. UNLIKE PRENTICE, LEE (AGE 48) OPTED TO ACCEPT CLP DECISION AND ANNOUNCED HIS INTENTION TO RETIRE FROM POLITICS.

3. THE CASE OF FRANK TOMNEY (LONDON, HAMMERSMITH), HOWEVER, HAS BEEN THE FOCUS OF PRESS, RADIO AND TV COVERAGE. A RIGHT-WING ACKBENCHER, HE IS IN TROUBLE WITH LEFT-LEANING CLP FMR POOR SERVICE TO CONSTITUENCY AND HIS STAND ON EC (HE WAS PRO-MARKETEER FROM STRONGLY ANTI-MARKET CONSTITUENCY), AND HIS FUTURE HAS YET TO BE DECIDED.

4. WHILE LEE CASE IS OBVIOUSLY NOT AS SIGNIFICANT OR AS NEWSWORTHY AS THAT OF PRENTICE, ATTENTION PAID TO TOMNEY'S DIFFICULTIES SEEMS TO ILLUSTRATE THAT MEDIA COVERAGE HAS NOT BEEN EVEN-HANDED. WE DO NOT MINIMIZE SIGNIFICANCE OF SMALL LEFTIST CLIQUE AND IDEOLOGICAL CONSIDERATIONS IN PRENTICE AFFAIR. BUT BY FOCUSING ON ONLY

PERHAPS MOST IMPORTANT LESSON IN ALL THREE CASES: CLPS ARE BECOMING INCREASINGLY ASSERTIVE IN DEMANDING SERVICE FROM THEIR MPS, AND BOTH RIGHT- AND LEFT-WINGERS CAN RUN INTO DIFFICULTY WITH THEIR CLPS ON THAT ISSUE.

RICHARDSON

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